

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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| Property Address: | 1254-1258 Talbert Street and 1309-1313 Morris Road SE | X | Agenda |
| Landmark/District: | Anacostia Historic District | | Consent Calendar |
| Meeting Date: | March 23 rd , 2023 | X | Concept Review |
| H.P.A. Number: | HP 23-094 | X | New Construction Subdivision |

Applicant Solo Investment Group LLC, with plans by Siem Solomon, seeks concept review for construction of six multi-unit townhomes on vacant lots in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description

To the east of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Talbert Street extends up a steep hill and is lined by detached and row houses constructed from 1890 to 1936 that illustrate development trends found in other parts of Anacostia. Construction between 1920 and 1940 included a few examples of Colonial Revival and Bungalow/Craftsman working class housing. Further to the east the lots become larger in size, with the houses set back at greater distances – approximately 25-30 feet from the sidewalk- and appearing more suburban in character. All are single-family homes constructed from 1891 to 1931 that represent a mix of the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles.

Morris Road has multistory mixed-use buildings constructed within the past five years which line both sides of the road at its intersection with Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE. The north side of Morris Road exhibits level topography, while the topography on the south side rises above street grade. Concrete and stone retaining walls line the sidewalk along the south side of the roadway.

Project Description

The plans call for construction of a set of three three-story multi-unit townhouses on Talbert Street and a set of three four-story townhouses on Morris Road. The height of the Talbert Street properties will be 36’ and the Morris Road properties will be 44’. Each house would have a full width porch along the first floor and a mansard roof with dormers. The townhouses each feature a roof deck. The fenestration includes large windows grouped in pairs or singles on each floor with single lite entry doors. The rear elevations are similar to the front with large windows and balconies. The application does not provide material details or landscaping and lead walk details.

Evaluation

The proposed concept for 36’ tall three-story townhouses on Talbert Street and 44’ tall four-story townhouses is not compatible with the historic district. The Talbert Street houses overwhelm the adjacent contributing historic building and does not respect the massing, height and setback of neighboring historic buildings. Due to the close proximity of the project to historic buildings, HPO recommends the front of the new buildings should not extend further forward than the front of the adjacent buildings. The height of the new construction is significantly taller than the historic two-story contributing properties on Talbert Street and taller than the four-story condo unit adjacent to

the property. New construction should generally be no more than one story shorter or taller than buildings in the existing streetscape.

The Morris Street townhouses have less surrounding historic context than Talbert Street. The sloping hill might be able to handle the height of the four-story buildings however the proposed buildings' massing does not relate to the character of the street.

The size, texture, surface finish and other defining characteristics of exterior materials are as important as the type of material itself. Without material details and notes, the primary elevation features lacks appropriate notes on trim, porch, railings, and columns. The fenestration design is not balanced and should be studied to establish a more appropriate scale relative to the apparent size of building elements. Roof decks are generally not appropriate for the predominately two-story scale of the Anacostia Historic District, particularly on such tall buildings where they will be visible from perspective street views.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the applicant revise the proposal to include additional material details and that the project return to the Board for further review.

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